

Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)



Councillor Barry Anderson
Chair of Scrutiny Board
(Environment and
Neighbourhoods)

Membership of the Board:

Councillor Barry Anderson (Chair)
Councillor Geoff Driver
Councillor Ron Grahame
Councillor Graham Hyde
Councillor Mohammed Iqbal
Councillor Lisa Mulherin
Councillor Andrew Barker
Councillor Penny Ewens
Councillor Joseph Marjoram
Councillor Paul Wadsworth*
Councillor Rachael Procter*

*part year

The Chair's summary

I am once again pleased to be able to present this year's Annual Report for Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods). I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members of the Board for their continued support and encouragement throughout the year and for volunteering to serve on a number of working groups.

This year the Board has carried out a major inquiry reviewing the gypsies and travellers site provision within Leeds. We were approached by the Executive Board Member with portfolio responsibility for Neighbourhoods and Housing to review the Council's current policy of continuously moving families from one illegal encampment to the next. We established a working group which met on several occasions taking evidence from over twenty two witnesses. These included the police; ward Members, Leeds GATE, roadside gypsies and travellers, New Wortley Residents Association and a Senior Fellow of Sheffield Hallam University. We published our report quickly within the deadline which had been set for us. The recommendations were well received by the Executive Board.

We had one Call -In during the year on the Future of Council Housing following an Executive Board decision on 3rd November 2010. We released this decision for implementation. However, arising from this Call-In we subsequently agreed to review the establishment of the Strategic Governance Board and undertake an inquiry on the establishment of a Shared Service Centre for the three Leeds Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs).

We considered two requests for scrutiny. The first was on the decision of the Directorate of City Development to undertake a twelve month pilot scheme with a

company to provide media advertising in the city centre. This was an interesting dilemma as consultation had been undertaken with the Directorate for Environment and Neighbourhoods on the proposals but did go against the zero tolerance policy for graffiti. Discussions are currently ongoing.

The second request was for the Board to consider lessons learned from the Refuse Collection Route Rationalisation Programme. Whilst we agreed that an inquiry needed to be undertaken on this matter we acknowledged that it would be inappropriate at the present time to take up scarce resources whilst the service was still getting back to normal. We concluded that in the circumstances, this inquiry should be undertaken in the next municipal year.

We completed two inquiries which we started last year on Integrated Offender Management and Recycling; details of these can be found on the Council's website. We also revisited our decision to recommend to the Executive Board that the number of dogs which could be walked by one person should be four which was incorporated into the Council's Dog Control Orders. We heard representations from a number of professional dog walkers, owners of working dogs and secretaries of Kennel Clubs who thought six to be a better number. We agreed to disagree.

We have actively monitored and challenged the performance indicators of the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate and received regular reports on the budget for 2010/11.

We have commented on a number of ongoing plans, strategies and service areas including, the Vision for Leeds 2011/2030, the joint report of the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary on acquisitive crime with focus on domestic burglary.

The current financial climate means tough times ahead and no doubt a lot more scrutiny in order to achieve greater value for money.

Councillor Barry Anderson
Chair Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods)

Inquiry to Review Gypsies and Travellers Site Provision within Leeds

Summary

This inquiry reviews the Council's policy with regard to the Gypsies and Travellers site provision within Leeds and has identified a number of positive proposals that if accepted could contribute significantly to easing the current cycle of evictions of Gypsies and Travellers from unauthorised sites within Leeds

Anticipated service benefits

Since the last Scrutiny Board inquiry in 2004/05 there continues to be a high number of unauthorised encampments within Leeds, particularly during the summer months. Some of these encampments cause considerable local difficulties, both in terms of management and an impact on local events, the environment and the community as a whole. At the same time the Council and other agencies continue to incur significant costs in what are often cyclical evictions of Gypsies and Travellers from one unauthorised encampment to the next. Our review may help to break this cycle.

Some of Our Recommendations

That the Executive Board consider providing negotiated stopping sites for gypsies and travellers in Leeds for very short term encampments and commission the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to undertake further work with a view to introducing a pilot scheme and reporting back to the Executive Board.

That the Executive Board consider the principle of providing an additional 25 permanent pitches for 25 caravans in the city to accommodate "Leeds families" of gypsies and travellers and request the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to undertake further work based on national guidance to identify costs, and sources of funding and to develop a criteria for consulting and identifying suitable sites during operation of the pilot.

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods continues to develop a strong residents group on the Cottingley Springs site that could be the catalyst to engage more with the local community and that this formal arrangement should be established by June 2011.

That the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) be asked to undertake a specific investigation on the national and local position of gypsy and traveller girls school attendance and educational achievements at 11 years and above.

"In recent years, the lack of authorised caravan spaces has become serious. It has had three inevitable effects; authorised sites have become overcrowded, there has been much unauthorised camping and wealthier Gypsies and Travellers unable to get planning permission have bought land and moved onto it regardless".

Councillor Tom Leadley

Inquiry Report Integrated Offender Management

Summary

It was clear that reducing burglary would be critical to realising the overall target for serious acquisitive crime and to help achieve this, it would be necessary to reduce and manage offending behaviour which is identified as one of the strategic outcomes within the Safer Leeds Partnership plans.

Anticipated service benefits

Whilst acknowledging that an Integrated Offender Management (IOM) system has been established, our recommendations, if implemented, will help to strengthen this framework. It will help to ensure that IOM principles are embedded across the wide range of partners involved in managing or modifying behaviour of offenders, including those outside the criminal justice system.

Some of Our recommendations

That the Safer Leeds Partnership Executive ensures that the Leeds IOM Operational Guidelines for the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Strand of IOM provides sufficient clarity about the structures and lines of accountability within the Leeds IOM Hub and are widely disseminated amongst all partners

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on ensuring that particular attention is given to improving the connectivity of employability support services for offenders as part of the Leeds Works and Skills Plan.

That the Leeds Strategic IOM Board and the West Yorkshire Criminal Justice Board give consideration to the development of having a local dedicated IOM court in order to best utilise partnership resources.

“We wanted to strengthen the existing framework of the Integrated Offender Management system to ensure everyone involved knows their respective roles and responsibilities”.

Councillor Barry Anderson (Chair)

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods seeks to ensure that the Deter Young Offenders Scheme within the Leeds Youth Offending Service remains a priority in terms of local authority funding and continues to champion the scheme amongst the criminal justice and other partner agencies in his capacity as Chair of the Safer Leeds Partnership Executive.

That the Safer Leeds Partnership Executive ensures that appropriate information-sharing mechanisms are put in place to enable local intelligence about prolific and other priority offenders to be shared effectively with Ward Councillors.

That the Leeds IOM Board and the West Yorkshire Crown Prosecution Service work together to explore and develop appropriate mechanisms for ensuring that a consistent approach towards PPO cases is being adopted by the regional charging team, with particular focus on how evidence and advice provided by the Police, Probation Service and Offender Managers/Case Workers is used in the public interest

Inquiry Report on Recycling

Summary

Our report acknowledges that whilst recycling has become a part of every day life for many people, it is recognised both locally and nationally that further action is still required to divert waste away from landfill. One of the key aims set out within the Leeds Integrated Waste Strategy 2005-2035 is to achieve a combined recycling and composting rate of greater than 50% by 2020.

Anticipated service benefits

An improved recycling service to the public that encourages recycling of a range of products which reduces landfill costs.

Some of Our Recommendations

In recognising the benefits of the green bag SORT collection scheme and communal collection scheme in addressing the challenges presented by hard-to-access properties, we recommend that these schemes are given priority consideration for those areas across the city with similar property types that do not have access to a kerbside SORT collection service.

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that, where consultations are being conducted with Ward Members and local residents around appropriate recycling service options, that the relevant Area Committees are regularly kept informed of progress.

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the findings of the options appraisal around the collection and recycling of glass across the city is reported back to Scrutiny for consideration as soon as possible.

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods ensures that the findings arising from the future planned review into the operational practices of Household Waste Sorting Sites and Bring Sites be reported back to Scrutiny for consideration.

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods explores the potential benefits of adopting pneumatic waste collection systems, such as the Envac system currently installed in the new Wembley City residential complex, and also other individual subterranean systems within Leeds in consultation with and input and advice from the Director of City Development.

That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods explores the feasibility and potential benefits of developing and piloting an incentive scheme as a way of engaging more people to recycle.

That the findings from the independent market research project into the recycling patterns of residents living within areas of the city with a high student occupancy, be brought back to Scrutiny as soon as possible for consideration.

“We hope that it proves feasible to develop an appropriate incentive scheme that would encourage more people to recycle particularly in student areas”

Councillor Gerry Harper

Inquiry Report to Review the Establishment of a Shared Service Centre (SSC) for the Leeds Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs)

Summary

Our report looks at the potential savings identified as a result of the establishment of the SSC and considers what further efficiencies could be made. It also looks at the best fit of services to be delivered within the SSC and the potential to develop single service level agreements with services delivered to the ALMOs by Council service departments.

Anticipated service benefits

We support the establishment of the SSC which will significantly reduce costs , introduce efficiencies and promote consistency of service across the city regardless of which ALMO their client comes under.

Some of Our Recommendations

Subject to consideration and approval of the Scrutiny Board

Review of Dog Control Orders

Summary

We were asked in November 2010 (because of our earlier inquiry on this matter) to consider the proposals of the Executive Board as to whether the limit on the number of dogs which could be walked by one person should be six, in line with DEFRA guidelines, or restricted to four. We had regard to the results of the consultation survey carried out by the Council in which 68% of respondents felt that four or less dogs was the maximum number one person could safely control and clean up afterwards.

Anticipated service benefits

We hope that our proposals will contribute to the safety of the public in reducing dog fouling and reducing the number of uncontrolled dogs in our community.

Our Recommendations

That the necessary Dog Control Orders be issued limiting the number of dogs that could be walked by one person; even for professional dog walkers to four.

That this Board monitor the situation and receive an update report when the new Dog Control Orders have been in operation for six months, to include details of all enforcement action taken under these orders and how effective they were deemed to have been prior to a report being presented to the Executive Board.

We then received representations in January 2011 from various quarters of the city including professional dog walkers concerning our decision to reduce the number of dogs that could be walked by one person to four. They wanted the number to be six.

Our Recommendations

That the status quo be maintained pending consultation over the introduction of phase 2 of the Order and a report back to this Board.

That officers, in consultation with dog walkers, investigate the possible benefits and practicalities of introducing a voluntary licensing scheme for dog walkers, allied to a code of conduct and a public campaign, and include their findings in a report back to this Board.

Other work of the Board

Pilot of New Recycling Services in Rothwell

We considered a report on the outcome of a six month pilot scheme operated in Rothwell which, in addition to the monthly recycling collection, also involved a fortnightly garden waste collection (excluding winter), a fortnightly black bin collection and for the first time a weekly food waste collection. We supported the extension of this pilot and the development of a longer terms strategy for food waste processing.

Vision for Leeds 2011 - 2030

We contributed to the development and updating of the Vision for Leeds 2011 – 2030 document. We discussed and commented on the stated aims and objectives of the new Vision and felt that two specific areas needed to be included; sustainable transport polices and robust child care services

Development of a Rent to Mortgage Model

We supported the development of a Rent to Mortgage Model housing scheme which is to be piloted in the East Leeds EASEL regeneration area initially involving ten properties. This is an excellent scheme aimed at assisting local residents to get onto the housing ladder at a time when mortgage shortages and high deposit requirements are preventing this.

Presentation Homes and Community Agency

Mr David Curtis, Director Yorkshire and the Humber, Homes and Community Agency spoke about the role of his organisation and the excellent working relationships which exist between the Agency and the Council. We had an extremely interesting and useful discussion about the number of empty private properties in the city and what could be done to bring more of these properties into occupation

Burglary Joint Inspection Safer Leeds Partnership

We considered and commented on a report issued by the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) on burglary in Leeds. The reductions in burglary during 2010 reflect the commitment and effort of the Safer Leeds Partnership.

Interruptions in the Refuse Collection Service

We received a report from the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods on interruptions in the Refuse Collection Service. We subsequently agreed to undertake an inquiry on the refuse collection route rationalisation programme to see what had gone wrong and what lessons could be learned. We agreed that this inquiry should take place in 2011/12 as the service was only just returning to normality and we did not want to remove scarce resources by undertaking an immediate investigation..

Other work of the Board

Budget 2010/11 and 2011/12

We received regular reports on the financial position of the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate in 2010/11. We monitored closely the forecasted income and expenditure and actual results on a monthly basis Directorate.

Trial of Pavement Advertising in Leeds City Centre

We considered a joint report of all the Council's relevant Directorates on the trial of controlled clean advertising on designated areas of pavement in the City Centre. The trial commenced on 1st January 2011 for 12 months and we made a number of comments to the Directorates on this issue.

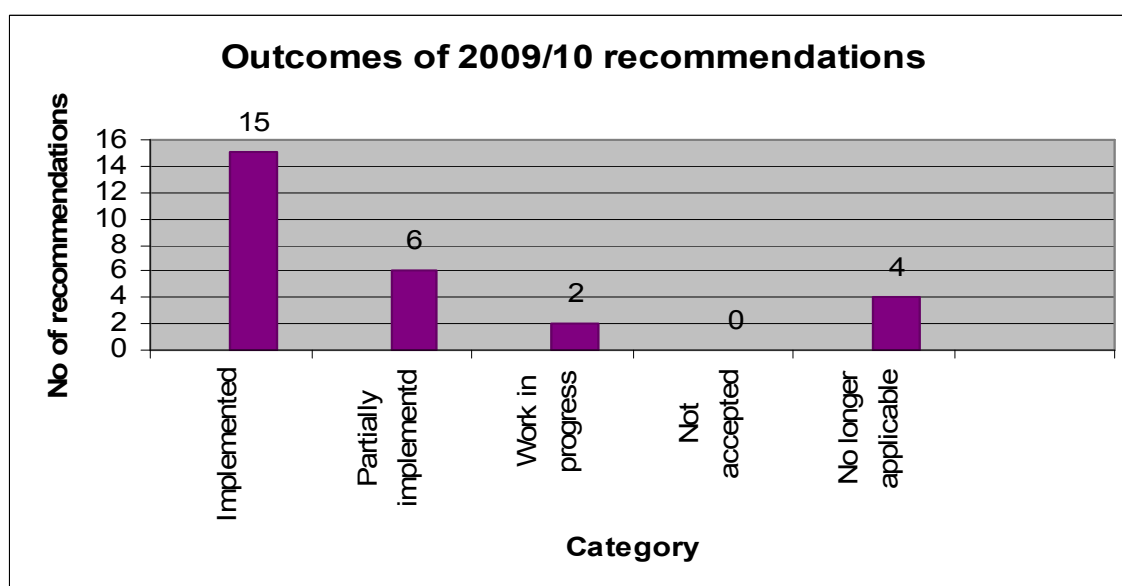
New Strategic Plans 2011- 2015

We commented on the proposals for a new Strategic Plan for 2011-2015. We raised concerns about a number of issues including public transport, health and well being, housing and educational achievements against a back drop of world recession and vastly reduced resources

Outcome of recommendations made in 2009/10

The Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) completed four inquiries in 2009/10, which resulted in 27 recommendations. A further three inquiries commenced in 2009/10 were completed in 2010/11. This section highlights some key examples of where these recommendations have resulted in service benefits, or otherwise added value.

- The EASEL inquiry focused around the process arrangements in place and our recommendations would help to strengthen communication links with key stakeholders and the EASEL communities about their programme.
- The Procurement Housing Contract statement identified where procurement practices within the Directorate and across the Council could be strengthened.
- We focused our next review on the House Letting Process and contributed to the development of a robust risk assessment process where more detailed and comprehensive information is gathered at an early stage in the housing application process, such as housing need assessment, and utilised effectively throughout the lettings and housing management process.
- Our interim statement on the Grounds Maintenance Contract followed discussions with a number of Parish Councils who had a range of issues and concerns with the current contract and we wanted to ensure that these would be addressed in the procurement of the new contracts.



The Board's full work programme 2010/11

Requests for scrutiny

- **Decision to enter into an agreement with Curb Clean Media advertisements in the city centre**
- **Refuse Collection Route Rationalisation Programme**

Review of existing policy

- **Recycling Inquiry report and recommendations**
- **Gypsy and Traveller site provision in Leeds**
- **How local authorities and other agencies gather, use and share information**

Development of new policy

- **Pilot of new recycling services in Rothwell**
- **Vision for Leeds 2011 -2030**
- **Integrated Offender management inquiry**
- **Gypsies and Travellers site provision in Leeds inquiry**
- **The Future of Council Housing and the Strategic Governance Board**
- **Dog Control Orders**
- **Development of a rent mortgage model**

Monitoring scrutiny recommendations

- **Procurement of Housing Contracts inquiry - Formal response**
- **House Lettings Procedure inquiry – Formal response**
- **EASEL inquiry – Formal response**
- **Private sector rented housing**
- **Integrated offender management – Formal response**
- **Recycling – Formal response**
- **Worklessness**

Performance management

- **Performance report year end 2009 /10**
- **Performance reports for quarter periods 2010/11**
- **New strategic plans 2011/2015**

Briefings

- **Budget analysis for housing revenue account and general fund 2010/11 and 2011/2012**
- **Gypsy and Travellers update on illegal encampments and outcome of previous inquiries on this issue**
- **Homes and Community Agency presentation**
- **Acquisitive crime with focus on domestic burglary**

Call In

- **The Future of Council Housing**